

APPENDIX A.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL.

As stated in the last annual report, a Medical Research Council was established in December, 1937. At its first meeting the Council decided that the subjects which should be taken up for research should include those which are of vital concern to New Zealand, and the Council therefore selected nutrition, goitre, tuberculosis, hydatid disease, and dental caries. Later, an investigation into the causes of maternal deaths was added to the list.

The Council decided that its best course would be to set up for each research a small Committee of persons directly interested in the subject in hand, and to ask such Committee to prepare and submit for the Council's consideration a programme of work and an estimate of the cost involved. Those approached on the subject willingly responded to the appeal from the Council, with the result that the following Committees have been established:—

- Nutrition*: Professor J. Malcolm (Chairman), Dr. Muriel Bell, Professor C. E. Hercus, Dr. E. Gregory.
Goitre: Professor C. E. Hercus (Chairman), Professor J. Malcolm, Dr. N. L. Edson, Mr. R. L. Andrew, Dr. R. A. Shore.
Tuberculosis: Dr. T. W. J. Johnson (Chairman), Dr. Chisholm McDowell, Dr. W. Gilmour, Dr. T. R. Ritchie, Dr. H. B. Turbott.
Hydatid Disease: Sir Louis Barnett (Chairman), Dr. C. S. M. Hopkirk, Dr. T. R. Ritchie.
Dental Caries: Professor R. B. Dodds (Chairman), Mr. J. L. Saunders, Dr. R. E. T. Hewat, Mr. D. V. Donaldson.
Obstetrical Research: Professor J. B. Dawson (Chairman), Dr. T. F. Corkill, Dr. Ian Ewart, Dr. T. L. Paget, Dr. Hilda Northcroft, Dr. F. O. Bennett.

The reports for the year of the Research Committees dealing with nutrition, goitre, hydatid disease, dental caries, and obstetrics appear as annexures to this report. In the case of the Tuberculosis Research Committee, considerable delay took place in arranging for work to be commenced owing to circumstances largely outside the control of this Committee, and, therefore, no report was submitted for the year ended 31st March, 1939, but research work is now being actively pursued.

The Government and the country are under a debt of gratitude to those who, in a voluntary capacity, are giving their time and services in the furtherance of research into the problems named.

NUTRITION COMMITTEE.

As an initial step the Nutrition Committee began its survey of the problems of nutrition in New Zealand by getting the opinions of as many of the medical practitioners as possible in a questionnaire designed to gather information as to the incidence of diseases that are considered to have some dietetic basis. The practising doctors were also asked to give their impressions regarding the consumption of certain particular foodstuffs believed to be used in excessive amounts. Altogether some seven hundred doctors were circularized, from 47 per cent. of whom replies were received, probably as satisfactory a percentage as could be hoped for. It was not expected that the answers would give adequate scientific basis for determining a clear line for future work, and indeed many state that they have filled in the answers on "impressions only." But the questionnaire has been valuable if only to get into touch with any who are keen to collaborate or who know of places where experiments have been or could be done.

Of the *diseases* listed as having dietetic or possible dietetic etiology there is outstanding comment on dental caries, though it is stated by some to be improving. Goitre, rickets, gastric and duodenal ulcer, rheumatoid arthritis, constipation, diabetes, hypertension are classified by the majority as "common."

Of the *foodstuffs* upon which comment was invited the general opinion seemed to be that there is no underconsumption of meat, and 50 per cent. say that there is too much, which agrees with statistical data on this item in New Zealand.

There is also the widely held opinion that too little fish is eaten, pointing to the factors of undersupply and cost.

Cheese and brown bread are listed as not sufficiently popular. On the adequacy of vegetable consumption, opinion was about evenly divided.

Comments were made on the cost of fruits (especially citrous), green vegetables, fish, on the difficulty of obtaining them, and on the fact that oatmeal had been supplanted by patent foods.

The majority think that insufficient attention is paid to mineral requirements during pregnancy; the main minerals thought to be lacking are iron and calcium.

Iodized salt is apparently not in general use for cooking, though it is used for table purposes.